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CONSUMER EDUCATION

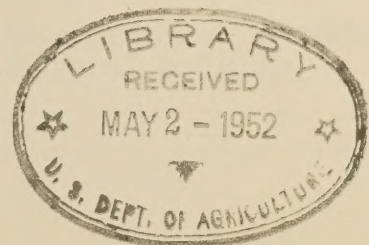
MARKETING INFORMATION

Report Prepared by

Consumer Education and Marketing Information Section

Division of Agricultural Economics

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EXTENSION WORK IN MARKETING *

CONSUMER EDUCATION AND MARKETING INFORMATION

Educational programs in consumer education and marketing information are conducted by the Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service. Puerto Rico and 16 States are participating in consumer education work under specific RMA projects, and 9 other States are cooperating in 4 regional programs. Nine States have marketing information programs under RMA projects, but every State extension service does some of this work.

The Consumer Education and Marketing Information Section of the Division of Agricultural Economics, Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, is responsible for assisting State extension services in the development and improvement of these educational programs. Miss Loa Davis is our leader in methods and subject matter for consumer education. O. M. Johnson is concerned primarily with marketing information and reports. Edwin A. Johnson, in charge of the Section, is responsible for program development and general procedures.

This report deals primarily with consumer education and marketing information programs under RMA projects, but includes examples of other marketing information work. This is not an appraisal of work done in the various States. These examples are selected to show the different types of work and to describe ways of conducting such educational work. Other reports give more specific information about educational programs dealing with marketing of selected farm products.

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CONSUMER EDUCATION

An educational program that provides information for food shoppers to help them purchase the family food most effectively. It helps them understand marketing. It develops better food-buying practices. It tells about efficient care and use of food in the home. In helping consumers it helps farmers who produce the food and the handlers who distribute the food supply.

Millions of consumers read newspapers and magazines, talk with their neighbors, listen to the radio, and watch television; these are lines of communication used by Extension for food-buying information. Extension must go to the people.

1. Newspapers

Studies show that the food page in the newspaper is a widely read page -- one that is especially popular with women. Up-to-the-minute localized food-marketing information makes this page more usable. Large newspapers incorporate food-buying releases as a part of their food page. Such use is reported by specialists in Alabama, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, and Connecticut. Minnesota, Utah, Washington, and many other States send the weekly news stories to county extension agents for release and localization.

In Connecticut, the Hartford County home extension agent writes a weekly column for the Hartford Times. In New Haven County, the New Haven Register includes such information as a part of its own daily food column.

Family Food News is a weekly service provided by consumer education specialists in Michigan to 97 newspapers -- weekly and daily. The subject matter is based on buymanship, methods of determining quality, availability, supply, and utilization. On the average, a single story from Family Food News is carried by 15 newspapers -- 7 weekly and 8 dailies -- with a combined circulation of 330,000.

In the New York regional project, news releases are used by 8 papers in New York City. In the surrounding counties, 32 papers use them regularly and 26 periodically.

A study was conducted to learn the effectiveness of the Extension weekly food column in the Norwich Bulletin. Norwich, Conn., is a city of about 25,000. It was found that 80 percent of the homemakers interviewed read the Norwich Bulletin regularly. "Spending Your Food Dollar" column is read by 57 percent; 37 percent said they were helped to buy foods that were in abundant supply, and 29 percent said they found selection of fresh fruits and vegetables to be much easier.

In New England there are 127 daily newspapers and 398 weekly newspapers. All these newspapers have access to the New England Food Marketing Bulletin and

to its press releases, either directly from the Boston office or through the county extension agent's office in the six New England States. Here it is localized. A staff writer for a large New England newspaper says of this weekly service: "Our readers like that food-marketing information. We have had a lot of letters from them telling us how much they appreciated our letting them know what the best food buys are. They say they look forward to the suggestions."

2. Radio

Methods that reach many people quickly are the ones that are essential to a successful consumer education program. Radio is one of the ways to inform many food shoppers of abundant supplies, good quality, and foods in season. All the State and urban consumer education specialists use radio effectively in one way or another.

In St. Louis, Mo., the specialists send radio releases regularly to four different stations where the material is used by station talent. The specialists are on the radio only as occasional guests. Personnel at radio stations are interested in food marketing and are happy to forward the helpful information to food shoppers. The specialist in Seattle, Wash., finds two kinds of programs effective -- a 2-minute spot announcement at noon, highlighting good buys, and an early program every Thursday morning which reaches the working woman as she has breakfast and helps her plan for the food shopping she will do on the way home.

Radio programs on the busses in Baltimore, Md., carried spot announcements on food marketing from the Extension Service 3 days a week. The weekly food-buying radio program is used by each of the five stations in the Oklahoma Group Network. In Birmingham, Ala., the specialist does semiweekly programs at the negro station. This program, which features a market summary and the selection of food along with its care and use, has proved very popular.

In several of the States, radio scripts are sent to county extension offices, localized, and used either by members of the county staff or by station personnel themselves. Radio stations in New England, for example, are regularly using this food-marketing information.

3. Television

Television is a way of demonstrating food selection, care, use, and other market information to millions of food shoppers who never attend meetings to see demonstrations. It is a way of reaching not only the stay-at-home woman, but also the man of the house or the teen-ager who may do the family food shopping. It is an expedient and easy way to reach city audiences with food-marketing information that has time and place value.

Effective use of television is reported by Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New England, New York, Oklahoma, and Utah. Nearly all of the consumer education specialists who have access to television facilities are using them in regular programs or as guests, or in getting food information to the people who do use it on their regular programs -- for example, home economists who do food shows.

"This Week With Food" is the 6-minute weekly television program of the consumer education specialists in the New York metropolitan area where there are over 1½ million television sets. In Michigan, a series of 15 shows featuring how to buy each of the Basic Seven food groups was viewed by 20,000, according to the station ratings. The food-buying 30-minute weekly show was rated top daytime show by 68 percent of the homemakers in Minneapolis in a study conducted by the station. The Delaware marketing staff, in addition to its 15-minute weekly show, has two 2-minute spots, "Best Food Buys of the Week," on other programs. Typical of the weekly consumer education show in Louisville, Ky., is the one which featured strawberries from the patch to the consumer's table by showing production, selection, grading, buying, and use.

4. Bulletins and Other Publications

Food-marketing bulletins, leaflets, food news letters, market information summaries, and food fact sheets are ways of reaching food shoppers and people who disseminate information to food shoppers. A weekly food-marketing bulletin from the New York metropolitan area office and another from the Cornell office for upstate New York go to Extension personnel, public health, social service agencies, welfare agencies, child care centers, colleges, public schools, educational agencies, commercial home economists, institutional food buyers, press (newspapers and magazines), radio, and libraries. A similar bulletin from the New England office goes to nearly 2,500 people in varied occupations who work with consumers. Similar weeklies are Seattle's "Know Why When You Buy," St. Louis' "Food Marketing Bulletin," and New Mexico's "Mealtime Delights." The Kansas City regional office has two weekly releases. "Better Food for Better Health" suggests to homemakers "good buys" to use in relation to preparing nutritious meals. "News for Food Shoppers" contains information relative to supply, quality, and price of food in Kansas City and is prepared for people who disseminate information to others.

Monthly or bimonthly food-marketing bulletins are used in Oklahoma, Minnesota, Kentucky, and Alabama.

Alabama consumer education specialists prepared a weekly food market fact sheet used by 196 cafes, hospitals, hotels, other food buyers, and professional workers. New York State, too, has a one-page mimeograph designed to help institutions buy food. It is sent to home demonstration agents, who send it to 342 institutions who have requested it. Special requests have come from the New York State Department of Health and Welfare for food-buying help for small institutions and hospitals of less than 50 beds.

The market place is where Puerto Rico uses its weekly food fact sheets. In Louisville, Ky., 125,000 such sheets were distributed through the stores.

"Food for Migrant Workers" was prepared by the Michigan consumer education specialists in both Spanish and English to help the Puerto Rican migratory workers with their food buying.

In the event of a glut on the market in Baltimore, Md., special commodity releases were sent to all radio stations and newspapers as well as restaurant owners, institutional managers, and departments of health. In 1950, 125 such releases were sent.

Special bulletins to aid in teaching food buying were Washington's "Your Money's Worth" and New York's "There's More Than Steak for Your Meat Dollar," "Passover Meals," "Currant Notes," "There's a Reason for Foods in Season," "Buy Good Food Every Day," and "Potatoes, Large, Medium, and Small."

5. Food and Youth

Many young people do the family food buying. 4-H projects have been prepared by the consumer education specialists in Oklahoma and Minnesota. In both Delaware and Oklahoma, demonstrations were given for high school classes.

The consumer education specialist in Alabama says: "Since many teen-agers do the family food shopping, there is a possibility of much work being done with them. Six demonstrations were given to 110 young people. At Ensley High School the group was composed of both boys and girls. At the close of the demonstration one boy said, 'My father has a grocery store. I work there after school and on Saturdays. I surely wish all the customers could hear what you have just said.' Probably his statement had more effect on the others in the group as to the value of this information than anything else. Other teen-age groups have been clubs that meet at community centers in the various neighborhoods in Birmingham."

More than price should be considered in wise food selection. Keep in mind also the quality, supply, food value, the use intended, the likes and dislikes of your family, and the time available for meal preparation.

MARKETING INFORMATION PROGRAMS

An educational program to interpret economic market information to farmers.

Three types of marketing information are included in the educational programs conducted by marketing economists. General information about economic conditions is incorporated in news releases and radio talks or included in discussions of factors affecting the market for farm products. Interpretation and application of market quotations and other market news reports are part of the educational program to assist farmers in the marketing of selected commodities. Market reminders and timely market news topics are distributed in some States to guide farmers in marketing.

Quite often there is a blending of this information in the material distributed to county extension workers and others interested in the marketing of farm products. In each State the work is adapted to local marketing problems and to marketing personnel available for this educational work in that State.

1. General Economic Information

Economic conditions are as changeable as the weather, and every change affects the market for farm products. The market for cotton, eggs, or wheat responds to world events perhaps more than to local changes. A summary of significant developments and a consideration of their impact on local markets are presented by extension economists in many States.

"Economic and Marketing Information for Indiana Farmers" presents pertinent information on marketing trends, problems, price outlook, and pricing factors. This monthly publication is read by nearly 100,000 people and is quoted very frequently in the press and on the radio.

"What Makes the Price of Milk" helped many Pennsylvania people get a better understanding of milk pricing. This exhibit was part of a larger program showing what is back of the price you pay. "Farm Business Radio Round-up" is another part of this program to give farmers and others facts about general conditions relating to the market for farm products. "The Price of Eggs" is a bulletin useful both for farmers and for consumers.

"Open Meetings" is a series of pamphlets used by discussion groups in Michigan in their consideration of the broad phases of marketing. Basic economic facts and principles are presented, especially for local leaders from labor, business, agriculture, and professional groups. International as well as national and local problems are considered in their relation to the market for Michigan farm products.

In Kentucky, marketing specialists place special emphasis upon furnishing farmers and farm leaders with economic information, both domestic and international, that will provide a basis for production and marketing plans. Meetings, clinics, and the monthly Market News Letter are supplemented from time to time by special reports, radio talks, and commodity letters.

In Massachusetts, general marketing information is presented in the "Whethervane" and also in such other publications as "Fruit and Vegetable Marketing" and "The Food Situation Bulletin." Marketing schools and market tours also acquaint workers with marketing information for farmers and consumers.

2. Interpretation and Application

Effective use of available market news and price quotations is essential to success in the marketing of farm products. With the increasing commercialization of agriculture, there is greater dependence upon distant markets and upon the interchange of information about prices and movement of products in trade channels.

In Alabama, a market news letter is sent out each week giving a quick summary of current prices together with summaries showing price trends. Explanations of significant marketing activities are made available to daily and weekly newspapers in the State. Timely news topics are prepared for use on radio programs each week.

Iowa is presenting new market outlook and price information to aid farmers in their production and marketing program. Price analysis and background information goes to farmers through market news reports, outlook letters, and press releases. Radio and television are both used to give prompt and widespread dissemination to the market analysis and interpretation of market facts as developed by extension marketing specialists. This has aided farmers in evaluating such information and adapting it to their own situation.

Daily compilation and analysis of market information on beef, hogs, eggs, broilers, and hens are used in Pennsylvania to prepare market information reports to farmers and the trade. Radio and newspapers are the principal means for widespread dissemination.

South Carolina published a daily market report giving prices and market conditions at selected markets for vegetables, livestock, poultry, and eggs. A weekly summary was also published. This helped to maintain a more uniform price throughout the State. Truckers were especially interested in this service.

Indiana's weekly "Farm Poultry Report" supplemented the Federal-State Market News Service by reporting the rural sales made at the farms. This meant increased earnings for both producers and various marketing agencies. It also meant a more even flow of poultry to market.

"Scanning the Markets" is a weekly radio program for Washington farmers. Market developments are examined in relation to action which farmers can take in marketing their crops or livestock. Forecasts of future trends are included. Four types of news stories are used in addition to a monthly bulletin, "The Washington Market Outlook."

3. Market Reminders

Improvements in marketing often consist of doing many little things at the right time. Seasonal changes are basic to many marketing problems and therefore come each year with more or less regularity. An important part of marketing information work is that of promoting timely action in the proper care or handling of farm products while they are in marketing channels.

In New York, a bimonthly poultry and egg market letter carries current information on poultry markets, hatchery, feed, and other items of interest to guide farmers in the proper care of their poultry and eggs so that they will reach the best market.

In Maryland, bulletins, demonstrations, lectures, and special articles served to give wide dissemination of marketing information about things-to-do-now to sell to best advantage. A Tomato Advisory Committee is an effective unit in the program to improve tomato marketing.

Alabama Extension Service distributes market reminders each month to its workers and thus encourages prompt attention to market problems. This includes suggestions on how market reports may be obtained and used.

The term "marketing information" has many meanings as used by different people. Here it is used to describe some of the educational work dealing with supply and demand for farm products. From the illustrations cited, it is evident that State programs are an adaptation to local circumstances. Usually this work is closely related to other educational work, such as outlook and quality improvement. It is an orderly arrangement of many facts helpful to an understanding of the market for farm products.